

On Georgia State University's campus, Centennial Hall is a reminder of Alonzo Herndon's legacy. Herndon was born a slave in Social Circle, Georgia, and grew to become not only Atlanta's first African American millionaire, but also one of the city's most powerful citizens. Herndon founded the Atlanta Life Insurance Company in 1905 which provided security, jobs, and unity throughout the African American Community. After Herndon's death, control of Atlanta Life passed to his son, Norris Herndon. The Herndons were more than businessmen; they were civic leaders as well. This research highlights the importance of Atlanta Life and the Herndons during the Modern Civil Rights Era. Without contributions from powerful men like the Herndons and institutions like Atlanta Life, many civil rights groups would not have had the funding and organization that they needed for success. This research emphasizes how Atlanta Life contributed time, money, and labor to civil rights groups. Specifically, we investigate how Atlanta Life and its employees contributed to the work of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The Herndons were not conspicuously involved in the movement, but they allowed Atlanta Life employees time off of work to picket and protest, and used the employees' time to make calls on behalf of civil rights groups. Atlanta Life officers provided strategies to bail protestors out of prison, and even printed professional signs for picketers. This research also discusses the involvement of Jesse Hill Jr., the third president of Atlanta Life, with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Finally, we explore how the money raised by these groups was used to achieve their agendas.